

CAPE COD TIMES

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YOUR TURN: Right to vote a cornerstone of democracy

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Published 5:06 a.m. ET Jan. 8, 2022

Around the Cape, the state and the country, people stood out in silent vigil or hosted online vigils in order to recall the horrific event that took place at our nation's Capitol building on Jan. 6, 2021.

What happened then was tragic; however, what is more tragic is that there has been little meaningful action by our elected officials both at the state and especially at the national level to collectively and adamantly assert that violence will not be tolerated and to secure equal, safe and unrestricted voting for all American citizens.

It appears that many of our legislators are quick with a sound bite, but when it comes to actually putting themselves on the line to stand up for the principles that our Democracy stands for, they are missing in action. Massachusetts legislators have yet to pass the VOTES Act. This is pretty amazing — and disappointing — given that Massachusetts appears to be progressive in so many other ways.

The larger failure is evident at the national level, as some legislators stood silent and others voiced their denial that the actions that took place on Jan. 6, 2021 posed a threat. Additionally, if our collective Congressional body was acting to “support and defend” the Constitution of the United States,” there would be a more unified voice with little argument about passing the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act.

If these potential laws need adjusting, then our legislators should be working around the clock to come to a compromise agreement, bring them to a vote and get the job done. This is the way Congress is supposed to work. Instead, nothing is moving.

Some think that our legislators are no longer working for the good of the people, but only for the good of their re-election or their political influence. When keeping the job becomes more important than doing the job, American democracy becomes imperiled. It is incredible that some Congressional legislators, both in the House and Senate, regard themselves as so important that they need to control the process. It has become “my way or no way.” This behavior is unacceptable and unsustainable.

We all need to take some responsibility for the changes that have taken place within our country. Voters often choose candidates based on single issues that align with what they want. In order for a society to move forward, it may be important for voters to consider what is good for the majority. We all have needs and sometimes compromise is the way forward.

The ultimate responsibility for a competent government lies with the voters. If we do not exercise our vote and eliminate those who cannot or will not do their job, the status quo will remain. Voting is the ultimate way to indicate approval or displeasure of the job being done. This is why the right to vote is so crucial for all citizens.

For those of you who wish to remember Jan. 6, 2021, please do so by reaching out to those in office. Let them hear once more that the right to vote for all is a cornerstone of democracy. Ask your state legislators to support Massachusetts' VOTES Act and your Congressional representatives to push for the two national voting rights bills.

Let them also know that if they are not willing to work for voting rights and open, fair and just elections, then they are not doing their jobs and we will hold them accountable. After all that, I think I will add to my vigil a re-reading of the U.S. Constitution and a Prayer for Peace.

Suzanne Brock is president of the League of Women Voters of the Cape Cod Area.